

Introduction to the HICSS 51 “Social Movements and Social Technologies” Minitrack

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Innovations often lead to revolutionary change, but few do so as directly as social technologies, which have been credited with literal, political revolutions, e.g., the Arab Spring. These social technologies have transformed the nature of collaboration, facilitating social movements and priming societies for social change. The rapid pace at which social technologies are evolving presents a challenge to scholars as we investigate digitally-enabled social movements to understand theoretical and practical implications.

Social movements entail prolonged, organized efforts to bring about – or inhibit – social, cultural, or political change, often related to identity. Understanding of social movements requires investigation of the campaigns and events that comprise social movements, as well as the social technologies through which these events, campaigns, and movements are organized. For years, system sciences scholars have been laying a foundation for social movements and social technologies research through HICSS proceedings [e.g., 1; 3; 4]. The goal of this minitrack is to provide a home for this growing stream of research within the system sciences community. The papers in this minitrack focus on various concepts related to social movements and social technologies, including collective and connective action online, digital activism campaigns, and viral social media events.

Four papers were accepted for presentation in this minitrack. First, viral social media events are examined by *Pöyry, Laaksonen, Kekkonen, and Pääkkönen* who find that social media events are likely to go viral when cross-platform diffusion takes place. This research provides insights into the mechanisms behind social media events that gain traction, and describes practical implications that activists could apply to optimize diffusion of activism frames. Next, *Johri, Karbasian, Malik, Handa* and *Purohit* investigate the #ILookLikeAnEngineer cyberactivism campaign and find that critical events, often external to the campaign, trigger connective

action on Twitter. This research introduces the concept of cyberactivism triggers and provides a typology for future research. The third paper in this minitrack discusses a case study of the Black Lives Matter Movement by *Lundgaard, Razmerita* and *Tan*. This paper describes how organizing structure, engagement, and communicative content shape collective and connective action. The typology of collective and connective action tweets outlined in this manuscript provides a framework for scholars investigating cyberactivism in similar social movements. Finally, *Ahuja, Patel* and *Suh* investigate digitally-enabled social movements across the globe and find that the nature of the social movement – whether the goal is to build networks or achieve sensemaking synthesis – determines which type of strategy is likely to lead to success. This research contributes to understanding of how social media platforms afford or constrain collective action online.

The movements, campaigns, and events described in these papers are interesting and important contexts for research, which provide rich insights about system sciences that likely would not have been discovered in corporate research contexts. Notably, the insights revealed in these papers contribute to understanding of corporate organizing, in a world where emergent digital designing and collaboration is increasingly replacing traditional methods of organizing [2]

Our review of the papers submitted to this minitrack revealed a clear opportunity for future research to develop or clarify definitions for concepts related to social movements and social technologies. Terms and phrases that remain vague or disputed include cyberactivism, hashtag activism, slacktivism, clicktivism, activism campaign, social movement event, digitally-enabled collective action, activism triggers, and digitally-enabled connective action. Future research is needed to explain how social movement theories can contribute to understanding of social technologies.

References

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